

The Outfit

by inugomefiend

Category: Bleach

Genre: Romance

Language: English

Characters: Ichigo K., Rukia K.

Status: Completed

Published: 2016-04-12 00:45:32

Updated: 2016-04-21 05:17:49

Packaged: 2016-04-27 18:34:33

Rating: M

Chapters: 5

Words: 13,879

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: Rangiku talks Rukia into wearing a sexy outfit to Ichi's b-day party, leading to lemon-lime content and love confessions! NOW COMPLETE!

1. Chapter 1

The Outfit

****NEED TO KNOW STUFF: ****For this story, it is Ichigo's senior year in high school, Rukia is staying in the twins' bedroom, and she still goes to school with him. If that's enough to qualify for AU, then go ahead and call it that. Also some people might find some stuff OOC. I try hard to be as IC as possible, within the realm of possibility for the characters, but some people might think I need to put that label on here anyway, so I'm throwing it up just in case. Also, I am making Rukia more the aggressor in this one, and Ichigo more the hesitant one. If you don't like that, please move on. (tho if I write another one of these, I'll probably reverse their roles) Oh, also€"it should go without saying, but: Everyone at the party can either see the Shinigami or the Shinigami are all in gigai. Take your pick! And, of course, gigais work exactly the same way human bodies do. Just putting all this stuff on here for whoever might complain if I don't.

****LAYOUT: ****I never paid attention to the layout of the house in the anime, so my brain made up a house for this story to take place in. Come in from outside, you are in the living room. Straight ahead is the kitchen, with an archway and no door. To your right is a staircase. To the left of that staircase and recessed a ways is Isshin's bedroom (and you can add another bathroom there too if you like). Up the stairs to your right are the girls' bedroom, a bathroom, and then Ichigo's room.

****_The Outfit that starts it all-on Rukia-is now my cover art, drawn by my talented young daughter!_****

(to that end, if you'd like a better view of it, please find this story on Wattpad under name 'missycamp,' then copy and paste full web address into new tab)

```
**THERE WILL BE AT LEAST ONE LEMON AND ONE LIME IN THIS STORY**.  
**THERE WILL BE NO FURTHER WARNINGS!**
```

One last thing: This is not a jealousy/angst story; Renji and Orihime are barely mentioned. Please look elsewhere for such a story.
TY!

[illegible]

* * SATURDAY * *

"Why did I agree to do this again, Rangiku-san?"

"Because we need to get you into something more _festive _for Ichigo's birthday party, Rukia! It's a special occasion, after all; all of his friends from here _and _Soul Society will be there! Isshin went to great lengths to set this up, ya know."

"But why does Ichigo's birthday require me to buy a new outfit? Shouldn't he be the one dressing up?"

"This party is supposed to be a surprise, is it not? Then you should surprise him by wearing something nice for a-Ooooooh! Look at this one, Rukia! This would look terrific on you!"

Rukia glares at Rangiku for her almost-comment on her usual garb, but then looks over the outfit the older woman has found, dressing a store mannequin. The top is a strapless black half-shirt-vest with a heart-shaped 'neckline' around the breasts; two big silver buttons on the front ; the white sleeves begin midway down the upper arm rather than at the shoulder; frills adorn the cuffs; there is a 'slice' in a straight line through the whole of each of the sleeves, running from the gathered tops around the arms down to the tailored wrists; and a sheer white mesh overlay is sewn into the bottom of the bodice, for covering the belly button-without completely obscuring it-and adding a touch of modesty to a rather seductive blouse. The bottom piece is a mid-length black leather-like skirt that clings to the hips and posterior but flares into a feminine ruffle at the bottom. A flower pattern decorates the skirt, with one white rose depicted on each side of its front, their stems crossing at the bottom. A red accent belt is fastened around the top of the skirt, and red high heel boots complete the outfit the mannequin is displaying.

"Well," says Rukia, "I must admit, this is a lot cuter than anything else you've made me try on so far, but this isn't really my style. It's a littleâ€¦revealing."

"Rukia, look! It's on sale!"

Rukia sighs, obviously not happy with this one either. Rangiku then leans in close to Rukia's ear and whispers, "And Ichigo won't be able to keep his eyes off you!"

Rukia's violet orbs widen. Then she gets a thoughtful look on her face before repeating, "Well it is the cutest thing you've made

me try on so farâ€¦and it is on saleâ€¦mmmâ€¦I guess I'll take it." Rangiku grins at Rukia's cool-and-casual face knowingly. "See? Didn't I tell you this place had something for everyone?"

"I guess," replies Rukia with seeming disinterest. However, in the back of her mindâ€¦she wonders if Ichigo really will...

****QQQQ****

"No, no way! I changed my mind, Rangiku-san, I'm not going in there likeâ€¦"

"Ru-Ru-Rukia?" Ichigo sloooowly looks her down and up and up and down, eyes wide and jaw open. He had just stepped out onto the porch, ready to go fetch some more ice, when he sawâ€¦

Red high heel bootsâ€¦slender legs under sheer hoseâ€¦_hipsâ€¦__**belly button**_â€¦and right around a red pendant necklaceâ€¦he couldn't believe his eyes!

Rukia's face is fireball-red, quickly turning to the side.

"Iâ€¦Iâ€¦I'm going to go change. Happy birthday, Ichiâ€¦"

"Don't you dare!" exclaims Ichigo, surprising himself and Rukia both.

"Er, uh, I meanâ€¦you lookâ€¦" Now it's Ichigo's turn to redden.

"Ahemâ€¦you look fine the way you are," he finally manages, trying to avoid settling his eyes on her suddenly _out thereâ€¦_and incredibly tantalizing-breasts. "Come on in and join the party!"

Finally, Rukia turns her head to face Ichigo. His face is flushed, but he's wearing a small smile, and his eyesâ€¦_his eyesâ€¦_

Now that he can see Rukia's face, Ichigo notices that she's also wearing make-up! Not overdone, but veryâ€¦attractiveâ€¦

I wonder if that lip gloss is flavoredâ€¦

Rukia is terribly embarrassed by _Ichigo _seeing her like thisâ€¦yetâ€¦part of her _likes_ it.

I've never seen that look before. It looksâ€¦likeâ€¦more than just surprise. It makes me want to ki-

_=What the...? What the _hell_ am I _saying_?= _ they both think simultaneously.

"W-well, shall we go then?" offers Ichigo, a little thrown-off. He takes hold of Rukia's arm, and leads her back inside the house, having forgotten all about the ice.

Within moments, people start to _notice _Rukia. The first to approach is Keigo. With his usual dopey grin spread across his face, he exclaims, "Wow, Rukia, I didn't even know you _had _boobs!"

Blam!Blam! Both eyes at onceâ€¦one Ichigo-fist, and one Rukia-fist.

After this, all the guys in the room quit staring and don't attempt

to approach out of fearâ€"save one.

"_Rukia? _I-is th-that you?" stammers Renji, his eyes wide.

Rukia's face begins to burn. "Hey, Renji," she answers weakly, avoiding his eyes. But before Renji can comment on Rukia's outfit, a gaggle of girls swoops in.

No men in the room (aside from Renji and Ichigo) would dare say anything to Rukia about her clothes, now, but the women all feel the need to compliment Rukia's new outfit. This just makes Rukia feel all the more like she's standing out in the crowd she'd rather get lost in, anonymously. Her face is in a constant state of flush with all the attention.

The girls grab Rukia's arm and take her around the room-basically "showing her off" to other girls-leaving two gaping guys unconsciously watching a suddenly noticeableâ€"and sexyâ€"backside disappear into the crowd.

All the girls fawn over Rukia, but her mind is otherwise-occupied. Her eyes continuously scan the room for Ichigo. To her surprise, she frequently finds himâ€"his eyes already upon her. _Though she does not notice, there is also another pair of eyes on her all night, too.

After what feels like an eternity of torture "with the girls," Rukia is finally reunited with Ichigo, having been around the whole living room _and_ kitchen now.

"S-soâ€"h-how do you like my party, Rukia?" asks a suddenly-nervous Ichigo, his eyes darting to Rukia's chest against his will.

"Umâ€"it's nice. You sure have a lot of friendsâ€"

"Correction," Ichigo replies with a half-smile, "_We_ have a lot of friends. Half the people here are friends I made through you!"

Rukia smiles. "Half the people here are friends _I_ _made through _you_! Anyway, uhâ€"where's your family? I haven't seen themâ€"I thought surely _they_ _would be hereâ€"

"My dad left a note on the fridge for me. He said he was taking my sisters to a nice hotel for the weekendâ€"and not to leave the house for any reason. That's when I knew what he was up to with this little 'surprise' party. Frankly, I would rather be staying in a nice hotel for the weekend, too!"

"Me too!" _Oopsâ€"that's not what I meant, damn it!_

Rukia blushes at the verbal miscue, but Ichigo's rare chuckle banishes her embarrassment.

"Well, since crowds don't seem to be _your_ _thing_ either, how 'bout we get outta here for a little while? I was supposed to go buy some ice an hour ago."

Rukia nods her reply, throwing him the half-smile she borrowed from him. They head toward the front door side by side-a sad pair of eyes

watching them leave. _Did you wear that for _him_â€|Rukia? Do you care more for him than for me? What does he have that I lack?_

Just as Rukia and Ichigo step onto the front porch, two late-comers to the celebration arriveâ€|Tatsuki and Orihime. Both girls gape in shock at Rukia's new look.

"Y-you look nice, Rukia," squeaks out Orihime, willing her eyes to stay _up_â€|and _dry._

Tatsuki pays Rukia a compliment, too, and Rukia thanks the pair graciously. The three girls make small-talk for a few minutes to be politeâ€|Ichigo's eyes travelling all the while. To the left, right next to himâ€|and _downward_.

Finally, the pleasantries come to an end, and Ichigo and Rukia head _outside _as the other two head _inside_.

_I* bought a new outfit, too, Kurosaki-kunâ€|just for you. Tatsuki says it brings out my eyes and shows off myâ€|what did she call it?â€|'robust bust.' But what good is it to have a lot of cleavage when the only person you want to notice it can only see someone else's? And she doesn't even have any! My best friend _Tatsuki _notices me more than _you _do, Ichigo._

QQQQ

Ichigo and Rukia walk in comfortable silence, side by side, each lost in thought.

Rukia is bewildered. _Heâ€|he wasâ€|he was _looking! _He seemed to beâ€|sortaâ€|_watching _meâ€|all night! Was it just because it's such a shock to see _me _of all people wearing something like this? Butâ€|on the porchâ€|Orihime was right there in front of him, wearing a very sexy outfitâ€|I mean her boobs were falling out of that thing! Yetâ€|he wasn't looking at _her _well-endowed chestâ€|he wasâ€|looking at _my_ petite one! Soâ€|does that meanâ€|Ichigo was looking at mine out ofâ€|_preference? _More importantlyâ€|WHY THE HELL DO I EVEN CARE? Why am I even thinking about this? Why am Iâ€|actuallyâ€|_hoping_ that it's the latterâ€| _

Rukia shakes her head, trying to get such deviant thoughts out of her head.

Meanwhile, Ichigo is struggling with some deviant thoughts of his own. _My godâ€|I always knew Rukia had breasts tooâ€|but you really can't ever tell with the clothes she usually wears. But _this _thingâ€|I swear, all I can _see _are Rukia-boobs! I mean, Innoue's outfit is even more revealing than Rukia'sâ€|and Innoue definitely has more cleavage-butâ€|the only breasts I really care to see belong toâ€|waitâ€|WHAT THE HELL AM I THINKING?_

With dual sighs of relief, the convenience store lights come into view.

"Hey, they got a McDonald's here, Rukia. You wanna grab a bite while we're here?"

"Didn't you eat any of the food your guests brought for the party?"

"Yeah, but nobody brought Big Macs."

Rukia smiles. "Sure, why not."

QQQQ

Ichigo notices something when Rukia lifts her sandwich to her mouthâ€¦_red fingernail polish._

God that's sexyâ€¦

"Rukiaâ€¦you painted your fingernails?" he asks without thinking.

A flash of hurt zips across Rukia's face.

_Crap, I didn't mean it _that_ way, _thinks Ichigo.

Putting down her burger, Rukia crosses her arms in front of her and tilts her head to the side, upturning her nose in mock arrogance. "Only because it's your birthday. Rangiku-san said people dress up for birthday parties here and I just went with it. I'm sorry if you don't like it. Hmph!" Then she adds quietly, "I didn't know your favorite color."

FLASHBACK:

"First the make-up, then the outfit, and now you want me to paint my fingernails? Rangiku-san, are you _sure_ this is what people here do for _birthday_ parties?"

"Of course I'm sure! I can't believe you don't already know that, considering how much time you've spent here. Nowâ€¦what's Ichigo's favorite color?"

"How should I know?"

"Nevermind. Red's better anyway. It will go nicely with your outfit, and if we find a shade matching your lipstick, it will accent your lips, too. Besides, red is a classic!_ That's because it's the sexiest!" wink_

END FLASHBACK

_Rukiaâ€¦youâ€¦did that just for me? _

"I didn't say I didn't like it. It's justâ€¦well that and the dress and the make-upâ€¦it's all just a little_ unlike _you, that's all."

Rukia stares down at her uneaten hamburger. "Maybe that's why I did it."

"What do you mean?"

"Oh!" says Rukia upon realizing she just said that out loud. "N-nothing. Etoâ€¦I just did this because Rangiku-san said it was normal. It's not like I'm going to go to school this way or anything."

"That's too bad," Ichigo asserts under his breath.

"What was that?" asks Rukia.

"Nothing, nevermind. Anyway, I'm just glad you're still _you _inside there. Not that I don't like what's _outside_."

Rukia smiles through a blush, Ichigo's deeper than hers when he realizes what he just said.

"Well, we're gonna miss the whole party if we're any much later, we should hurry up and eat so we can get back."

"Right," responds Rukia, turning her attention back to her burger.

****QQQQ****

On the way back, Rukia and Ichigo are too busy juggling two bags of cold ice each to think too much, much less speak to one another with anything substantial. They make it back to the party in virtual silence; then hang out until all the guests are gone—Renji, Orihime, and Tatsuke being the last to go. Afterward, they clean up the place until all that's left is the dishes. Neither wants to do the mountain of plates and silverware, so they agree to share the chore. Rukia washes while Ichigo rinses and dries.

Ichigo has to focus hard on the dishes to keep from checking out Rukia's rack. Rukia, too, is finding it a little difficult to concentrate on what's she's doing for constantly turning her eyes to Ichigo. Then, reaching for the soapy plate Rukia is holding, Ichigo by mistake latches onto Rukia's hand. He freezes, his breath rate increasing. Rukia's eyes widen and her heartbeat picks up. Momentarily, they each feel the warmth of one another's hand. Then Rukia lets go of the plate entirely, suddenly panicking. Ichigo tries to grab it, but fails to do so since his fingers had been attached to Rukia's hand and not the plate; the other hand too far away to grab it in time. It hits the floor and shatters.

Rukia looks up at Ichigo, still feeling panicked. Ichigo is giving her the strangest look—and she feels like it's sucking all the air out of the room. A flushed Rukia, feeling weird and in a state of panic, does what she does best. She breaks the tension by picking a fight.

"You dropped the plate, baka!"

Ichigo is jarred back to reality. "What? _You're _the one who dropped it, _baka!_"

"When I let go of the plate, _that's _when you're supposed to take it! You didn't do that, and now look!"

"Well _sorry _I wasn't looking where I was grabbing! Fine, I'll clean up the mess. But you have to rinse and dry while I'm doing it!"

"What? You agreed to half of the job! It's not half if I do part of your job too!"

"Well I have to clean up this mess! I can't do both at the same time, and I don't want to be down here doing dishes all night long!"

"Fine! If it'll shut you up, I'll do it. But only until you get that cleaned up! Then you get back to your station!"

"Hey, don't order me around like you're a Captain and I'm a Lieutenant! You're no boss of mine!"

"Oh shut up already."

Ichigo grumbles, but finishes cleaning up the broken plate and then resumes his 'post' next to Rukia until the dishes are done.

"That's the last one, Ichigo."

"Oh thank the Kami. I thought the end would never come! Well, I don't know about you, but I'm about ready for bed now. It's well past midnight."

"Well, I'm definitely tired, but I have to shower first. Get all this make-up off. And out of this outfit."

Ichigo's heart skips a beat. A flash of Naked Rukia rushes through his mind. Shaking his head to clear it, he says goodnight to her.

****QQQQ****

Ichigo lies in his bed, trying to keep Rukia and that damn outfit out of his head. He really is tired, and all he wants to do is sleep. His eyes fall closed just in time to hear the shower.

His eyes fly open in a hurry. _She's naked in there! _Cue the mental images. And the consequences of seeing them. _Crap! I can't believe I'm actually getting a hard-on for _Rukia! _She's my best friend, for crying out loud!_

With that thought, Ichigo puts on his headphones and listens to his mp3 player to drown out the sound of the shower, and fights back the image-onslaught by doing math problems in his head. Eventually it works, and he gets to sleep.

On the other side of the wall, taking her shower, unbidden images of _Ichigo_ in the shower suddenly rush through Rukia's mind. _What the hell was that? Where did that come from?_ She doesn't know, but she decides then to finish up quickly.

Soon she is in her bed, nearing a restful sleep, when _those images_ return. Her pulse rises, as does her curiosity as to _why_ she is suddenly having such thoughts about her _best friend_. _Too tired to ponder, she simply turns on the radio to a popular station and sings along to her favorite songs until sleep finally comes for her.

****QQQQ****

****A/N: **I doubt I'll get too many readers, considering this fandom**

is practically dead nowâ€¦show was over what, four years ago? It's new to me (hulu, ya know) but it's old news for everyone else. But it was sure fun to write! If you do read it, I would appreciate a pm or review (or email), whether you liked it or not or if you have suggestions to make it better. ** I LOVE editing advice! **Also, my daughter the artist just turned 13! If you don't care to comment on the story, please at least leave a feedback for my baby girl's art, won't ya? She would really love that. And she worked hard on that picture, too. Thank you to any and all readers, whether or not you leave a feedback/pm!

2. Chapter 2

****SUNDAY****

Rukia walks downstairs, yawning and stretching, wearing her usual pajamas. She finds Ichigo already up, cooking in the kitchen.

"I didn't know you could cook, Ichigo," Rukia comments, bypassing the traditional morning greeting.

"You don't have to sound so surprised, Rukia."

"Why didn't you wait for me? I could've done thatâ€¦!"

"Everyone from Soul Society eats weird stuff. I didn't want to eat whatever bizarre concoction you would come up with!"

WHAM! Over the head with a breakfast plate.

Whirling around, Ichigo shouts, "I'm standing in front of a hot stove here! Do you want to start a fire?!"

"Don't insult my cooking!"

"Learn how to cook!"

They glare lightning bolts at each other for a moment, growling, before Ichigo returns to his eggs and Rukia to her chair.

Both were glad things seemed to be back to normal.

****QQQQ****

After breakfast, the pair cleans up the kitchen and gets ready for the day.

Back downstairs, they both have a seat on the couch and start watching television. Ichigo is relieved that Rukia is now wearing a less "skin-ny" dressâ€¦partly.

But she still looks so beautifulâ€¦WHAT? OK, there is something seriously wrong with me, man.

Rukia, too, takes immediate notice of Ichigo's white tee and black jeans. Kami, he looks good in that. Wait, why the hell am I even looking?!_

That's when they both realize they are staring at each other. They

snap their heads back to the tv like they were just announced the winners of the lottery, staring at the screen intently.

After a few moments, Rukia has her head back on straight. "This is boring, Ichigo, find something else."

"No way. I'm watching this. It's funny."

"_That _is not funny! It's juvenile and idiotic! Which actually makes sense of why you like this, now that I think about itâ€|"

"ARE YOU CALLING ME JUVENILE AND IDIOTIC?!"

"Wellâ€|as they sayâ€|_if the shoe fitsâ€|"_

"You hypocrite! Talk about being juvenile, you think fluffy stuffed animals are cute, like a little girl! Which is _idiotic _too!"

There go the glares and growls again. When they finally break apart, Rukia insists on the remote. She "simply refuses to watch such nonsense."

Ichigo grabs the remote and holds it up out of Rukia's arm-length range. Incensed, Rukia scooches closer to get a longer reach and grabs for it anyway, intending to rip it from his grip. Instead, she finds her hand wrapped around his. Their eyes lock. Neither lets go. Slowly, Ichigo's head inches towards Rukia'sâ€|just as Rukia's inches toward his.

At that moment, the front door swings wide open and a jubilant (as usual) Isshin loudly announces his presence. "Ichigo! I'm home with your sisters! How was your party, son?!"

Ichigo and Rukia jump apart as soon as they hear the door open. They stare with shocked, red faces at Isshin, the twins behind him. They both stammer a "welcome back" and quickly excuse themselves to their rooms.

Rukia quickly shuts the door to the twins' bedroom, placing her back up against it, her heart pounding hard from more than just the surprise entrance of Isshin with his daughters. _What the hell? Was Ichigo about toâ€|was * _I*_about toâ€|? No, it can't beâ€|gotta be my imagination. Ichigo would neverâ€|and * _I*_ would neverâ€|_

The image of kissing Ichigo, however, visits her unbeckoned. _Kami, what is _happening _to me? Am I losing my mind?_

Two doors down, Ichigo is wrestling similar thoughts, sprawled across his bed. _I swearâ€|in that momentâ€|I was really gonnaâ€|and _she _wasâ€|now that can't be true. There's just no way. I had to have imagined that. Crap! I gotta figure out what the hell to do. Whatever is wrong with me, I need to fix it! I feel like I'm going bonkers here!_

Dinner that night goes fairly smoothlyâ€|but it does not escape Isshin's (or Karin's) attention that Rukia and Ichigo keep stealing glances at one another all throughout. _Well, well, well. It's about time, you two! _Isshin smiles to himself. Karin shares the same thought as her father, and hides a smile of her own. Yuzu, however, is clueless as everâ€|"for the time being.

Sleep, again, does not come easily for Rukia or Ichigo. They had both thought everything had returned to normal after that morning's breakfast, but with what _almost _happened on the couch, it was clear they had not. They both wrestle with their thoughts as they had before. Ichigo once again employs mental math and music to escape into sleep, but now that the twins are home, Rukia has to opt for an mp3 player with earbuds over the radio, and cannot sing along. So instead, she goes over scenes of her latest favorite book as she listens. Eventually, they both get to sleep.

****QQQQ****

****A/N: ****Sorry this chapter is so short! The others are longer, I promise!

3. Chapter 3

****MONDAY****

It's Monday morning, and everyone in the house is in a flurry getting ready. Breakfast is gulped down and lunches hastily made and then everyone is off.

Rukia and Ichigo walk side by side, not speaking, too lost in their own thoughts.

Wow, how is it I never noticed before how good Ichigo looks in his school uniform? Although, I must sayâ€|I still prefer the jeans-and-tee look, that was definitely hotterâ€|DAMN IT THERE I GO AGAIN! WHAT THE HELL IS WRONG WITH ME? Maybe I have a hormone imbalance or something. Anyway, I can't let these weird thoughts distract me today. I have work to do.

QQ****

Man, I never realized how short those school uniform skirts wereâ€|it's just too bad they don't show off her top, too, like that outfit she had on Saturdayâ€|CRAP! I'm doing it again! I gotta concentrate on my school work today, I can't be wandering off to places I shouldn't be going anyway, damn it!

All through class, Rukia can't help but steal glances over at Ichigo. She hides it behind her text book, or makes it look like she's peering out the window or glancing at someone else or even just around the room, anything she could do to have an excuse to look at him. She can't concentrate on a _thing, _no matter how hard she tries to. Ichigo so close by is just too much of a distraction. She becomes frustrated with herself, but is clueless as to how to stop it.

Ichigo, however, gets it worse. He, too, is stealing glances at Rukia from behind a textbook or through squinted eyes during an unnecessary stretch-and-yawn. Except that he can't help but focus on the legs he only just began to notice. _Those short little skirtsâ€|she's got more leg than I realized beforeâ€|and I can just imagineâ€|my hand on that legâ€|sliding that little skirt upâ€|FUCK! This cannot seriously be happening! I'm thinking dirty thoughts about Rukia again, AT SCHOOL, and now I've got a freakin' boner?! The bell's gonna ring in

five minutes! What the hell do I do? _

Panicked, Ichigo looks all around. His only choice is his backpack, though he knows it will look strange. But it's either walk out of there with a backpack covering his "front pack" or show the entire class his perversion. Sighing, and bracing for questions about what the hell he's doing, he readies the pack and starts desperately thinking of excuses to give people who might question.

The bell rings and everyone leaves, Ichigo dead last. He walks slowly down the hallway of a thinning crowd of kids with his backpack in front of him, making a bee-line for the front door. But of course, he does not quite make it out in time.

"Hey, Ichigo!" calls out Keigo. "That was some party you had, man! And Rukia! Did you get a look at her? Talk about wow! Hey, Ichigo—why are you carrying your backpack like that?"

"Uh— I uh— I injured my shoulder; it hurts to carry it on my back. Sorry, but I'm in a hurry. I don't have time to talk. See ya, I gotta run."

With that, Ichigo races outside. He catches a few strange looks on the way out, but Keigo is the only one who inquires about the bag out of all of them. Now safely outside school grounds, he breathes a breath of relief that it didn't go as badly as it could've gone. He soon catches up to Rukia, and the "danger" has passed by then.

That night's dinner is much the same as the one before. And, once again, neither Rukia nor Ichigo are getting any sleep.

****QQQQ****

It's after midnight when Isshin comes out of his bedroom and into the kitchen. He is surprised to find his eldest child leaning against the refrigerator. "Hey, Ichigo—what are you doing up?"

"Um— I kinda need to talk to you. I came downstairs after I was sure Rukia and the girls were asleep and waited for you to come in here for your nightly snack. I know it's late and I have school tomorrow, but I wouldn'ta got much sleep anyway."

"Hm. So what's the problem?"

"Dad," says Ichigo warily, "Eto— uh— well— um—"

"Spit it out, son! Don't be shy about it, just blurt it right on out!"

Ichigo sighs heavily. "Just so you know— my coming to _you _for advice just proves how utterly _desperate _I am for help! So you better take this seriously, no dumb jokes or any of your typical bullshit! Ya got that?!"

"Of course, of course! Now out with it!"

Ichigo takes a deep breath. "Well— it's about Rukia." He pauses, waiting for his dad's idiocy to begin. No sign so far— maybe for once he really _is _taking something seriously? Thus the junior

Kurosaki continues. "When you and my sisters were at the hotel last weekend, Rukia came in to my partyâ€|wearing something I never would have dreamed she would wear, she's usually so conservativeâ€|but this outfit...Godâ€|she looked so damn _hot_ in it! And she was wearing _make-upâ€|_though not too much, it was just right! I couldn't help but _stare _at her all night long! And ever since thenâ€| I can't seem to get my mind off her! When I go to school, I can't focus on my work 'cause I'm too busy staring at her legs. At night, I can't sleep because thoughts of her fill my consciousness. When I _do _sleep, I _dream _about herâ€|I mean the kind of dreams that send you to the shower in the middle of the night! Oh, and it gets worse, speaking of showersâ€|when she's here taking one, it's all I can do not to yank the door off its hinges and jump in with her! Ever since I saw her in that outfitâ€|Dad, I'm _lusting_ after my best friend! What the hell do I _do?"_

Isshin grins from ear to ear.

"So I _was _right! Welcome to love, son."

"What? This is lust, dad, there's a difference."

Isshin puts his hand on his first-born's shoulder. "Ya know, son, for some people sex is nothing more than a game to be played casually. But for guys like us, love and lust are one and the same. The more you love her, the more you want her. The more you want her, the more you love her. They feed each other in a never-ending cycle. It is the love that gives birth to the lust in the first place, and sex is a natural expression of that love, and you get closer and closer to her every time you do it. You'll understand when it happensâ€|and it seems that'll be sooner rather than later." He grins at his son, wiggling his eyebrows suggestively, just before being blown back into the wall across the room by his offspring's fist.

"I said no jokes or bullshit, Dad!"

Ichigo sighs as Isshin recovers and stands in front of him again. "Honestly, Dad, I don't know *how* I feel anymore. Everything used to be so clear. Now it's all hazy and confused in my head."

"You and Rukia have been crazy over each other for a very long time now; you just both keep hiding it from yourselves and each other. One of you was bound to burst sooner or later."

"What makes _you_ so sure how_ I_ feel when even *I* don't know? Much less Rukiaâ€|"

"Trust me, son, I'm your father, and sort of an adoptive father to Rukia-I know these things. Now lemme ask you this: Think back to before you met Rukia. Who was your ideal dream girl? Whether a real person or a fantasy you made up. Imagine that woman is real, and right here, right now, and nobody else. You're alone with the most attractive woman in the world and she_ desperately_ wants you. What would you do?"

"â€|"

"See? I just proved my point, and then some! Not only are you uninterested in 'casual sex,' but you're also already being faithful to her! You haven't even slept with her yet and you've already sworn

off other women!"

Ichigo puts his face in his hands, sighing again. "Maybe you're right, I really can't tell, but for right now, I just need some simple _advice_. What the hell can I do to stop these intrusive thoughts and dreams? Rukia deserves more respect than this, and I'm not exactly thrilled with myself for turning into such a freakin' pervert. Now can you help me or not?"

"Well, sonâ€|the sure-fire cure, of course, is just to do it! Sleep with her! Once you start getting the real thing, you won't have to dream about it anymore."

Up against the wall again.

"I'M TRYING TO BE *LESS* OF A PERVERT HERE, NOT MORE OF ONE, BAKA! Besides, just because_ I_ feel this way doesn't mean _she_ does." Ichigo's eyes drop at that.

Dusting himself off, Isshin replies, "Well, I can tell you that I know she _does_, but you won't believe me, so I'll just go with suggestion number two. TALK to her about it! Tell _her_ everything you just told me! I mean, shouldn't you be hashing this out with her since she's the only other person involved in this?"

"Out of the question! She would shove me into a wood-chipper if she knew I was having dirty thoughts about her! Do you really think I'm dumb enough to TELL her that?"

Now it's Isshin's turn to sigh. "Well, there's always diversion. Distract yourself with a little sake, a little RedTube, and a lot of long, hot showers. Don't do the cold ones; they just give you blue balls."

"WHAT THE HELL KIND OF A FATHER *ARE* YOU? Did you seriously just advise your teenage son to drink, watch porn, and masturbate?"

Isshin scowls. "No good, huh? Wellâ€|then read books, play video games, get a hobby. Just find something to keep yourself _busy_ with. Sorry, kiddo, that's all the ideas I got."

Ichigo sighs again in frustration. "Thanks for the help, dad. NOT!"

"Well, I'm sorry, son, this is more something your mother would be dealing with if she were still here. "

Ichigo snorts. "As if I'd talk to my _mother_ about things like this, Dad! Geez. Hell, I only came to _you_ because I'm desperate and I got nobody else I _can_ talk to about this! Well, anyway, I'm going to bed. Later."

Little did Ichigo knowâ€|that atop the stairs he was heading for, a little birdie was standing by the wallâ€|having heard his entire conversation with the elder Kurosaki.

QQQQ

Rukia hurries into the twins' bedroom, throwing herself quickly under

the covers and closing her eyes in fake sleep until Ichigo had passed by and she heard his door shut.

In the quiet darkness of the room, Rukia thinks about what she just heard. _Oh my godâ€¦Ichigo _does _want me? He might even beâ€¦he might even beâ€¦hell, why do such thoughts make me feelâ€¦soâ€¦excited? I meanâ€¦Iâ€¦I never thought of Ichigo as anything more than a friendâ€¦so why is what he just said affecting me like this? My heart's still racing, I can't slow my breathingâ€¦and I felt soâ€¦_happyâ€¦_to hear Ichigo say that about me. Since when did I care what he thought of me at all? And all those strange thoughts and feelings latelyâ€¦Did I evenâ€¦did I really choose that outfit because it was on sale? Or was it because of what Rangiku-san said? Could I beâ€¦possiblyâ€¦no way, that _can't _be true! I mean, wouldn't I _know _if I wasâ€¦_

Rukia sighs. _You're not the only one feeling weird things and being thrown into confusion, Ichigoâ€¦_

****QQQQ****

Ichigo stares up at the ceiling, nowhere near asleep in his all-too-quiet bedroom. His eyes turn to the closet door, behind which Rukia used to always be. He feels a tightness in his chest, all too aware that the closet currently stands empty.

Rukiaâ€¦

****QQQQ****

Three A.M. Rukia has been tossing and turning sleeplessly all night, unable to silence the echo of Ichigo's words or stop wrestling with her thoughts and feelings since thenâ€¦or prevent the flood of involuntary images of Ichigo. Ichigo smiling at herâ€¦Ichigo _kissing _herâ€¦Ichigo taking his shirt offâ€¦Ichigo wrapping his arms around her and pulling her to himâ€¦Ichigo _lying her down on the bedâ€¦_

_And you thought _you _were the pervert, Ichigo?_

With a sigh, Rukia gets out of bed, realizing sleep would be completely eluding her tonight. She decides to head downstairs for a midnightâ€¦er, three A.M.â€¦ snack.

****QQQQ****

Rukia heads down the stairs, turning right at the bottom to make her way into the kitchen. There she finds Ichigo, couched down in front of the open fridge, inspecting something in the back.

"Ichigo!" she cries in surprise, walking towards him.

"Rukia!" replies Ichigo, jolting up and bonking his head on the top of the fridge. "Ow!"

"Oh, sorry," Rukia begins, "you just startledâ€¦" That's when she notices. Ichigo isn't wearing a shirtâ€¦and his hair is wet!

_He just got out of the shower! Was heâ€¦taking his dad's advice in

there? Was heâ€|thinking about me? _Her heartbeat speeds up dramatically.

At the same time, Ichigo realizes that Rukia is wearing one of _his _T-shirts instead of her usual pajamas. He finds that very sexy in and of itself, though he doesn't know why, but that it is even sexier how short of a nightgown his shirt makes on her.

_With one tug up of my _pinky _finger I could see under thereâ€|'
_His heartbeat speedily catches up to Rukia's.

Rukia quickly becomes aware that she cut herself off mid-sentence, and that she is _staring _at Ichigo's chest. Thus she ends the awkwardness of the momentâ€"much to Ichigo's relief, as he suddenly finds himself without a thing to sayâ€"in her usual way. She starts another fight.

"Ya know it's downright indecent, the way you walk around here without your shirt on!"

"You're one to talk, wearing _that! _I can almost see your panties!"

Rukia doubles up her fist to punch Ichigoâ€|but kisses him breathless instead.

**QQQQ QQQQ **

Ichigo reels in shockâ€|and from the flood of tingly heat coursing through his body from Rukia's hot kiss. He kisses her back, wrapping his arms around her and pulling her partially-clad body into his equally half-naked one- prompting Rukia to encircle his neck with her arms.

Rukia's head is swimming. Ichigo's lips are softer, warmer, sweeter, more exciting than in any momentary fantasy she had ever had about it. Being pulled into his thermal embrace, just as her mind had conjured earlier, goes even further. No fantasy she could create in her mind at any time could _ever _compare to the feel of a real, live, warm-flesh-and-hot-blood Ichigo wrapped around her.

Ichigo feels like he's in the middle of a dream. Rukia's lips are equal parts hot and soft. Her body, despite being so much shorter than his own, feels like the perfect fit in his arms. She feels incredible there.

After a while of intense making out, the pair separate their lips from one another to each get a lungful of fresh air, without Ichigo letting Rukia out of his embrace. However, before Ichigo has a chance to question Rukia's seemingly out-of-the-blueâ€"and _weird_ (though thoroughly enjoyable)-behavior, Rukia speaks up.

Boldly looking up into Ichigo's wet-sand eyes, Rukia makes her confessions, running through the embarrassing monologue as quickly as she can: "Don't be mad, ok Ichigo? But Iâ€|I heard you and your dad talking. B-but it's ok! 'Causeâ€|I feel the same way. I've been thinking about it all night, and just like you, I don't really know for sure eitherâ€|butâ€|I do know I want to be with youâ€|Ichigoâ€|"

Ichigo pulls back, dropping his arms back to his sides. This was all just so weird, so out of character for Rukia-and so sudden. He hadn't yet even had time to process his _own _feelings, much less any of hers. His face reflects his discomfort. Rukia, however, misreads his withdrawal from her and his current expression.

Rukia lets go Ichigo's neck, tilting her head down. "You _are _angry."

"No, no, I'm not." Ichigo tilts Rukia's face back up with a hand to her chin. "I meanâ€¦I guess I should beâ€¦butâ€¦I'm actually relieved. *_You know*_ _now, without my having to explain anything to you or hide anything from you." A small but real smile graces his face. "And most of allâ€¦I was relieved to hear you feel the same. I was actually pretty worried about that, truth be told."

Rukia smiles, relieved herself. She wraps her arms around Ichigo's waist, laying her head on his chest. Ichigo encircles her with one of his own arms, the attached hand rubbing her back while the other smooths her hair. He hadn't ever thought about it consciously before, butâ€¦he had actually wanted to touch her like this for a long time. "Rukia," he purrs, the word rumbling deep from within his chest, sending shivers down the named female's back.

Rukia begins to rub Ichigo's bare back with the hands she has him 'trapped' with, thoroughly enjoying gliding her upper pair of extremities across the muscles there. She breathes in deeply, filling her nostrils with the familiarâ€¦yet also seemingly brand newâ€¦scent of Ichigo. His hair-petting and back-rubbing make her flush as with fever all throughout her body, in addition to the heat generated by the feel of his bare skin underneath her fingers.

Ichigo brings his face to the top of Rukia's head to kiss her hair, and breathes in the sweet fruit-n-flower scent of it, making him feel intoxicated. Her back feels nice, too, but not as nice as _her _hands on _him _feels.

Both of them feel the tension in the air, with Rukia's head and torso in direct contact with Ichigo's unclothed upper body, only a thin T-shirt between her bare breasts and his exposed skin. Rukia pulls her head from its resting place to peer up at Ichigo. She finds his grain-amber orbs sparkling with desire-and something else deeper within-that make her ache for more of him.

Ichigo sees the same in Rukia's wide lilac eyes, making _him _ache too. Thus he leans in for another kiss.

This time Ichigo parts Rukia's lips with his, introducing their tongues to one another. They moan in unison at their marvelous and decidedly memorable first tastes of each other. Ichigo then surprisesâ€¦and further stimulatesâ€¦Rukia by suddenly grabbing hold of her barely-covered bottom with both hands and pushing her hard into him. Rukia nearly screams when she feels his hard heat pressing urgently into her stomach through his sweatpants, his long fingers rubbing her backside even as he uses them to increase the tightness of his hold on her. Instead, she "mmm's" into Ichigo's mouth and tries to wrap a leg around him, finding it impossible to do because of their height difference. She only gets her short little leg around part of _his _leg. Noticing this, Ichigo grabs Rukia up, breaking the kiss long enough to plant her down onto the counter next to the

still-open fridge.

Re-enveloping her in his arms, Ichigo resumes kissing Rukia fervently, andâ€"no longer having to stand on them-she wraps _both_ her legs around his belly (the counter was too high up to position themselves right where they both really wanted). The feel of her panties against his bare belly makes Ichigo growl as Rukia slowly lets out a shaky breath of arousal.

Then Ichigo lets go of Rukia's back with both hands and uses them to cup Rukia's face as they kissâ€|then takes one hand and starts slowly traveling it down her front. Her neckâ€|the top of her chestâ€|then a little lowerâ€|then a little more. Rukia breaks their kiss to pant in order to get enough oxygen, as this heavy excitement was _literally_ taking her breath away. But much to her dismayâ€"and concernâ€"Ichigo stops right before his hand _gets there_. _He then removes both of his hands from Rukia's body and unwraps her legs from around him, then backs off entirely. He, too, is panting.

Rukia looks at him with a confused and slightly hurt look in her eyes. She opens her mouth to inquire about his sudden "change of plans," but he explains himself before she gets the question out.

"Rukia," says Ichigo, his voice dark and heavy from libidinousness, "I'm sorry. Please don't take this the wrong way, ok? I meanâ€|I want you, _believe me, _I want you. But this is a brand-new relationship we have now, I just don't think it's wise to move too fast. Please understand."

Rukia drops her eyes, disappointed. "I understandâ€|butâ€|" After a moment of uncomfortable silence, she continues, her whole head now facing the floor, "I understand thatâ€|for two strangers just starting to go out together, butâ€|_you and I_ have known each other for three whole years! It's not really a _new _relationship, it's just one that got bigger. Why should we have to go slow _now_, after all this time?"

Ichigo sighs. "Rukiaâ€|it's just sort of an unwritten rule. 'Never rush a relationship.' I've heard it all my life, every adult I ever knew has always said it. They say diving in head-first only leads to a quick destruction of the relationship. Ours may be not be new in the strictest sense of the word, but it's certainly _different _enough now to call newâ€|and I don't want that to happen to us. As much I enjoy touching youâ€|I can't let myself lose control. There is just too much at stake. Please understand."

"Well," replies Rukia sadly, still eyeballing the tile beneath the counter she remains seated on, "I can't honestly say that I do, Ichigo. But I understand that _you _need to slow down, no matter what your reasons are, and I won't push. If you need timeâ€|I won't rush you."

Ichigo then grabs Rukia around the waist and stands her back up on her feet. She finally lifts her eyes to meet his, and sees something there she did not expectâ€"_fear._

"W-well I guess I can'tâ€|can't ask for more than that, can I?" says a faltering Ichigo, knowing his "request for space" has bothered Rukia. He smiles dimly at her, hoping for a more positive response

this time.

Rukia responds by smiling gently at him, then taking his face into both her hands and giving him one last, lingering kiss. Then she bids him goodnight, and heads up to the girls' bedroom.

Ichigo is relieved. Yeah, he knew his hesitancy had hurt Rukia, but she had in the end seemed to find her own way of dealing with it, and ultimately let him know that she was ok.

QQQQ

Rukia and Ichigo, a bathroom and two walls between them, thrash about in their respective beds. Both know they'll be getting no sleep for the rest of what is left of the night—or, rather, early morning, as it is now past four A.M. Neither could get the memories of their recent 'encounter' out of their minds. Neither could forget the other's lips, taste, feel—the closeness of their bodies, the pounding of their hearts, the body heat they had shared, the desire for more—

Rukia could not stop the relentless burning between her thighs, just as Ichigo could not tame his wild erection. Each was yearning for the other.

Ichigo once again finds himself sadly staring down the door to his too-empty closet. He wants nothing more than to hold Rukia close to him again, even without any erotic touching going on. He misses her like she's been gone for a month, though it's only been half an hour.

Ya know, thinks Rukia, even without doing anything more—I just don't think I'll ever be able to sleep alone tonight. I want to hold him, now, all night. I think I could sleep through this—*distraction* down there, if only I were with him—I miss him so much already—I want to hold him—

QQQQ

Rukia walks into Ichigo's room, pillow in hand, her face flushed and turned to the side. Figuring he too would still be awake at this time, she tries to form her question. "Um—Ichigo—I was wondering if—well—uh—"

"Rukia," she hears him say. Turning to face him, she finds him half-sitting up, smiling at her, holding the covers back and patting the mattress beneath. "I was hoping you'd come in here," he admits. With a smile, Rukia gets into bed next to Ichigo.

She lies down on her pillow, facing Ichigo, small smiles on both their faces. Ichigo pulls her into his arms, and she wraps her arms around his back. Ichigo can't resist kissing those lips, so close and tasty—

Their kiss soon turns passionate, and Rukia throws her leg over Ichigo's waist. Feeling her panties touching the bare skin of his belly again drives him to grab Rukia and roll himself onto his back, her atop him. Then, as she sits up in surprise, he grabs her hips and lifts her up—to reposition her down onto the hardness straining though his boxers and sweat pants. Ichigo groans and closes his eyes

at the contact, while Rukia sucks in a gasp of both surprise and arousal.

As if of its own accord, Rukia's body starts to grind against Ichigo, sending shockwaves of pleasure through them both. Ichigo moans, his hands on Rukia's hips, helping her move. Opening his eyes, he looks up to see her head tilted back in pleasure, soft moans escaping her parted lips. He also notices her diminutive breasts moving with her strokes beneath his shirt. Without thinking, one hand leaves Rukia's hip to take one into his hand, the shirt thin enough to feel her erect nipple through. "Rukiaâ€" he whispers huskily, thrilling to the feel of her breast in his hand. Feeling the same thrill, Rukia bends forward, pressing his hand harder onto her. "Ichigo.." she whispers roughly, desperation in her voice. Then she reaches for the hem of "her" shirt to tug it offâ€"only to be stilled by Ichigo's hands. She then remembers what he said down in the kitchen and backs off, allowing herself to just enjoy what pleasures he _does _allow her to have.

Then both of Ichigo's arms wrap around Rukia's back and crash her down onto him, leaving only the smallest space between them to see one another's faces. Rukia continues her grinding, and gasps when Ichigo's hands grab her bottom and push her harder onto him. "Oh, Rukia," he rumbles, not unaware that there is nothing but a thin pair of panties between his bare hands and her bare butt. Rukia begins to cry his name and increases the speed of her grinding as she feels something powerful building up inside her. Ichigo begins to cry back _her _name as he approaches his own end.

Soon-through clenched teeth and held breath-"Ichigoâ€"Ichigoâ€"I-CHI-GOOO!"

Uninvited tears in her eyes, Rukia feels like she's been blown into another worldâ€"one that resembles Heaven, perhaps, but a little more eroticâ€"her whole body and mind and heart and _soul_ are rocked by the explosive physical sensation and accompanying intense emotions.

Ichigo is in disbelief at just how beautiful she looks in that moment, wearing an expression of complete bliss that _he _brought her, and tears ofâ€"it was all he needed. "Rukiaâ€" he breathes, as his own climax comes.

He had brought _himself _to orgasm plenty of timesâ€"even to thoughts of Rukiaâ€"but there was just no comparison. Even without so much as seeing her _naked, _this one was far beyond any other he had ever had.

"Ichigo," Rukia breathes into his ear, her head resting atop his shoulder, "That wasâ€"I meanâ€"I never felt anything like it before in my _life!"_

"Che. You're not the only one!" Rukia giggles at that, beyond happy that she was able to do this to him without even taking any clothes off.

"Well," Ichigo begins, lifting Rukia's head to speak to her face-to-face, "I hate to the ruin the mood here, butâ€"I kinda need to get back in the shower nowâ€"!"

"Oh, speaking of showers! Were youâ€¦I meanâ€¦" Rukia trails off, her head tilting downward. She had started to ask the question she wondered earlier without realizing what she was doing.

"What is it?" asks Ichigo. "Now's not the time to start keeping secrets from each other, Rukia. Go ahead and tell me, pleaseâ€¦"

"B-but it's really none of my business, and it's personal, and it might embarrass you, orâ€¦"

"Rukia! So what if it _is_ personal or even embarrassing. We're supposed to be able to talk to _each other_ _about such thingsâ€¦so what is it you wanted to say?"

"W-wellâ€¦when I saw you in the kitchenâ€¦your hair was wetâ€¦I knew you had come from the showerâ€¦and what your dad said before thatâ€¦and I wonderedâ€¦if youâ€¦thought aboutâ€¦"

Ichigo blanches. "Uhâ€¦that dependsâ€¦is it flattering or insulting?"

Rukia grins and squeezes him, then gives him a sweet kiss on the lips.

"I guess the answer is 'flattering'," says Ichigo with a devilish grin when she frees his mouth for speech. Then, with a peck to her cheek, he rises to head for the shower.

****QQQQ****

After setting a second alarm an hour before Ichigo's for Rukia to be able to sneak back into Yuzu's and Karin's room before their own alarm, the couple cuddles.

Lying next to Ichigo in his bed, his arm wrapped around her middle and his breath on her hair, Rukia drinks in the feelings of wonder, warmth, and closeness with Ichigo. Her eyes close as she falls into the most peaceful sleep of her life, her last thoughts being about him. _Ichigoâ€¦I'm not uncertain anymore. I know now _exactly_ how I feel._

Ichigo, too, feels more peaceful than he ever has before. _There is nothing better, Rukia, _he thinks to himself, _than holding _you _close to me. Tonight was the most amazing experience I've ever had. My feelings are still a jumbleâ€¦butâ€¦I feel closer to you now than I ever have before. _

****QQQQ****

****A/N: ****Let's just assume that the walls are thick in this house, ok? Hehe And, of course, there is a whole bathroom between the upstairs bedrooms, too. That's why the girls hear nothing that goes on. And Isshin's bedroom is downstairs and to the left of them, so he hears nothing as well. Does that work for you?

4. Chapter 4

****TUESDAY****

"Oi, Ichigo!" says an eager-as-ever Keigo. "I couldn't help but notice you and Kuchiki eyeballing each other all day today—something going on you wanna tell us about?"

Ichigo blushes, but does not answer. The crowd of male friends around him all get excited by that non-answer answer, and Keigo leans in close to Ichigo's face. "Ooooh, I see! So how far have you gotten with her then? Have you done it yet?" BLAM! One grinning face in the dirt.

"So—was that a yes or a no?" BLAM! Mizuiro's turn to face-plant on a childish grin.

"Ya know what?" says Ichigo, standing up with his bento and dusting the grass off his butt, "Why the hell am I wasting my time having my lunch over here with you jerks anyway? I have a girlfriend now! See ya!" With that, he heads towards the fence nearby where Rukia and her friends are sitting, having their own lunches.

Meanwhile, Rukia's friends are asking her about Ichigo. It seems the whole school noticed the way two were behaving toward each other today. She just smiles through a crimson face in response, earning giggles and congratulations from her companions—save one. Orihime just looks into her lap, her hands folded there, her head down.

"Ichigo!" beams Rukia when he shows up there. Orihime looks up to see Ichigo holding his hand out to Rukia, smiling, a happy sparkle in his eyes. "Rukia, what say you and I have our lunch over there?" Ichigo says, gesturing with a nod toward the side of the building a few meters away from the general population of the school. Rukia nods in agreement, taking his hand to stand and walking off with him, bento in tow. It's more than Orihime can take. She runs into the building to hide and cry in the ladies' room, Tatsuki following quickly behind.

Ichigo and Rukia enjoy sharing their lunch hour together, just talking and eating with one another. However, a persistent Keigo and all his followers won't leave them alone. They keep hollering non-of-your-business questions at them, as well as suggestive comments. Ichigo is getting annoyed, as is Rukia. Keigo finally shouts out, "Hey, why don't you kiss her?" Earning him a "don't go there or I'll kill you til you die from it" look. This just spurs the loudmouth on, knowing he had touched a sensitive spot. With that knowledge, he grins evilly, and keeps harping on it, getting his other friends—and even some of the girls, too—to start chanting, "Kiss! Kiss! Kiss!"

By this point, the entire schoolyard is staring at Ichigo and Rukia, all grinning, enjoying the taunts from Keigo and company, waiting to see what an angry Ichigo will ultimately do about it. What he ends up doing surprises everyone. Especially Rukia.

"All right!" He yells at the crowd of chanters, standing up. "You wanna see a kiss? Fine, I'll show you a freakin' kiss!" With that, he grabs Rukia's wrist, pulling her to stand. He walks a few feet forward to where everyone on the school grounds can see them both well. Then he pulls Rukia into his arms, dips her backwards, and lays a long, passionate kiss onto her lips. She beats his back with

her fists for it, kissing her in public like that, but he doesn't move his mouth from hers. The schoolyard falls so deathly quiet even the crickets refuse to chirp. Finally, Ichigo stands the two of them up straight again and lets Rukia go. She hauls off and punches him, her face sports-car red from her chin to her ears, then stomps off into the building-angry from the scene he just made, embarrassing her to no end. Ichigo just rubs his now-sore jaw with a smile, the whole of the school now cheering loudly as Rukia's back disappears into the high school.

But beneath the embarrassment and angerâ€|Rukia had to admit, part of her had liked it. It meant he wasn't in the least bit ashamed of her and didn't care who knew about their new relationship. It was flattering, really. And I have to admitâ€|it was pretty damn romanticâ€|what a kiss! I guess I have no choice but to forgive the jerk. Baka! Her lips upturn at the corners just a little as her anger dissipates. By the time the school bell rings, she is past it.

****QQQQ****

"You don't have to sneak out to be with Ichi-nii, Rukia," calls out a small, familiar voice from the dark. It's Yuzu. Rukia turns around to see Yuzu and Karin looking right at her. "It's ok!" Yuzu continues, now wearing a smile. "Right, Karin? The girl "mm's" her reply with a nod and a smile like her sister's. Rukia returns the girls' smiles, and thanks them. "Butâ€|how did you know?"

Karin answers, "We wake up every time you open the door. It wasn't hard to figure out."

Rukia blushes. "Well, goodnight." Then she is on her way to Ichigo's room.

Once inside, Rukia turns off the extra-early alarm, prompting the question, "what are you doing" from Ichigo. "The twins know," Rukia answers. "But they pretty much gave us their blessing!" That makes them both smile as Rukia slides into the bed. "Oi, Rukiaâ€|why are you wearing those? Where's the t-shirt?"

"Well I only wore it that one time because my pajamas were in the wash and your shirt was in the dryer. I didn't anticipate anyone seeing me in itâ€|"

Ichigo pouts. "I liked the shirt much better than this thingâ€|" He fiddles with a button.

"What's wrong with this?"

"Nothing, reallyâ€|but my shirt looks really hot on you."

Rukia grins. "Fine, I'll change. But you have to ditch your shirt in return!" With that, she hops up and grabs a tee from Ichigo's drawer. Said male wrests his eyes away from her as she begins to shed her pj's right there in front of him as if she did it every day. Then he slips off his shirt. Once changed, Rukia gets back into the bed.

"This better?"

Ichigo grins seductively. "Yyyeeaahh!"

Ichigo and Rukia wrap their arms around one another as their lips come together like magnets. The fire quickly returns to their kiss. Once again, Ichigo flips over and positions Rukia above him. This time, however, Rukia does something different. She stills where she is, looking deep into Ichigo's eyes, and cups his face in her hands. "Ichigo, there's something I have to tell you."

Ichigo freezes. It's never good when somebody says that. Especially a girl somebody.

"I-I don't want you to say anything, ok? I justâ€¦want you to know."

Oh shit. Here comes the bad news._

"There is no more doubt. Ichigoâ€¦I love you."

Ichigo's eyes and mouth widen in shock, staring into eyes that looked true to their owner's word. Then his open mouth is overtaken by Rukia's. Ichigo's heart is pounding so hard he wonders distantly why it isn't exploding. He felt something rush through him at Rukia's words that he could not explain, nor understand, but it felt wonderfulâ€¦and he suddenly wants Rukia so fiercely it is nearly unbearable, when he thought his want for her had already peaked. He crushes Rukia to him, kissing her ferociously. Then he flips them back over, covering Rukia's body with his own. Rukia wraps her legs around Ichigo as he begins to thrust forward, pressing sweats into panties. Rukia groans as Ichigo slides a hand over her bottom, ducking it under the shirt, and traveling upward. Rukia's breath catches as she feels Ichigo's hand upon her bare skin, climbing up past her belly...and then he suddenly halts. He removes his hand and rolls off of Rukia. "Sorry, Rukia. I can't do this."

Rukia sits up in a huff. "Damn it, Ichigo...what the hell is the problem here? Don't give me that 'never rush a relationship' crap, either. Since when are you the sensible type? Since when do you listen to anybody, ever? What the hell are you really afraid of? Why do you keep backing off?"

Ichigo's face hardens as he gets out of the bed, moving to the foot of it to face Rukia. "You wanna know so bad? Fine. Because I don't want to be today's mistake and tomorrow's regret! That's wh_y! Are you happy now?" Ichigo turns his back to the bed, crossing his arms, his face still stern.

Rukia, surprised at his answer, blinks for a moment. Then she gets out of the bed and places herself in front of Ichigo, who refuses to meet her eyes. She takes his face into her hands, turning his head to hers. "Ichigo, I wouldn't be here if I didn't want this. This is no mistake. And I could never regret you. I love you. Believe in me. Trust me."

Rukia's imploring eyes and encouraging words soften Ichigo's face. He looses his arms, and takes Rukia into them, kissing the top of her head as her arms wrap around his waist. "Thank youâ€¦Rukia," he breathes into her hair. Then he pulls back and kisses her gently. Without warning, he then swoops Rukia into his arms and plops her down into the middle of the bed and quickly covers her with himself.

Rukia instantly wraps herself around him, both of them groaning when his stiffness presses into her center. Ichigo then places one hand just under the hem of Rukia's "Ichitree," on the left hip where the shirt ends, bracing himself with his other arm. With a sly smile he whispers roughly, "Nowâ€¦where were we?"

Rukia mirrors Ichigo's expressionâ€¦until she feels his hand upon her flesh. The heat of his touch transforms her expression to one of excitement and anticipation. Ichigo is slowly sliding the fabric of her "nightgown" up her body. Her already-racing heart-rate increases.

Then Ichigo reaches his destination. He lifts the shirt above Rukia's breasts as his hand slides over the left one. Rukia arches her back with a moan as Ichigo runs his fingers hungrily over her breasts, in awe of how perfect they are.

After a few minutes, Ichigo sits up and lifts Rukia into his lap, her legs wrapping around his lower half, as he pulls his shirt completely free from her. He tilts her back for full access to her breastsâ€¦and descends upon one. He eagerly draws a straining nipple into his mouth.

"Oh, Kami," breathes Rukia, closing her eyes. A hot chill journeys through her body. Ichigo feels an exhilarating heat pulsing through him, making him moan. He suckles at her, gently at first and then more fervently, his tongue flicking back and forth across her saluting protuberance. Rukia feels it vibrate with Ichigo's low-pitched vocalizations, adding to her pleasure.

Then Ichigo raises his head and crushes Rukia into him. Feeling bare breasts on bare chest is electrifying. Ichigo runs his hands slowly over Rukia's back, as if to memorize each muscle, as Rukia responds in kind. Next he begins to kiss a path down Rukia's neck, causing her to exhale deeply.

Then Ichigo pulls back far enough to peer into Rukia's eyes just before kissing her again. "I missed your lips," he tells her with an honestâ€¦albeit smallâ€¦smile. Rukia reflects it. "Then kiss me again, baka!"

They share their mouths once more, starting softly and moving up to _fiery. _Then Ichigo lies Rukia back down on the bed, resuming his own previous position as well. He travels up her left leg with his non-supportive hand at a snail's pace, making Rukia ache.

When he reaches the hilt of Rukia's leg, Ichigo pauses for just a moment before trailing a finger over the middle of Rukia's damp panties. They moan simultaneously at the contact, and Ichigo begins to move the digit up and down. Rukia starts to pant as her hips begin to rise and sink against Ichigo's finger.

After a few minutes of this, Ichigo rises up again. He gets completely off the bed, leaving Rukia with a bewildered look on her face. She quickly comes to understand, however, when she sees Ichigo's sweatpants hit the floor. In a flash, Ichigo is back 'at his post' again, only his black boxers remaining of his clothing.

Ichigo kisses Rukia furiously, massaging her breast as he does so. He grinds his trunk into hers, the feel of the pressure much more

intense without the bulky britches. Groans escape from the two sets of lips.

Soon, however, Ichigo finds himself hungry for more. He slides his free hand between their bodiesâ€|and underneath Rukia's panties. She arches and moans as Ichigo strokes between her folds, and she instinctively bucks into him.

Ichigo drinks in the exhilaration of the feel of Rukia's hot wetness. It quickly drives him to remove his hand from that little hiding placeâ€|just long enough to get a finger-hold on the waistband of Rukia's undergarment. He tugs the underwear down, his hand lingering on Rukia's leg all the way down. Once the panties are off, Ichigo sinks two fingers inside Rukia's waiting womanhood. Rukia inhales sharply and tilts her head back into her pillow. Ichigo closes his eyes for a moment. "God, Rukiaâ€|" he breathes out gruffly. Then he begins to pump in and out, making both of them groan. Rukia then surprises Ichigo by grabbing the top hem of his boxers just above his bottomâ€| to tug them down. She purrs at the feel of his bare backside beneath her touch as she slowly lowers the cloth until she can reach no further. Ichigo then helps her out by removing his hand from between her thighs and getting the silky cloth the rest of the way off.

Rukia wastes no time in taking hold of Ichigo's inflamed appendage between their bodies, immediately tugging up and pulling down in repetition.

"Rukiaâ€|" growls Ichigo as he thrusts into her hand.

"Iâ€|chiâ€|go," Rukia draws out hoarsely, her lids half shut in desire.

Approaching the brink, Ichigo soon withdraws from Rukia's hand. He settles himself in the proper placeâ€|and enters. He stifles Rukia's gasp with a passionate kiss, their tongues rolling together as if they too were mating. Then Ichigo breaks the kiss to pull back and push in, repeating the motion slowly.

The feeling of moving inside Rukia is extraordinary. Ichigo's body is wracked by sensation. He has to hold back to keep from ending the party too soon.

Rukia receives Ichigo painlessly, and the ensuing motion is too incredible for words. Her body rocks into him without her willing it to do so, a warm and pleasurable pulsation running through her.

Ichigo quickens his pace, using his free hand to palpate Rukia's breasts. Rukia begins to pant his name, her hands traveling up his back and into his hair. Ichigo answers Rukia's calls with his own, repeating her name in turn.

Then Ichigo, on the verge of letting go, releases Rukia's breast to slip his hand between their conjoined bodies. He fumbles a bit, but when Rukia arches her back with a rapid and ragged inhalation, he knows he's in the right place. He begins to rub her pearl in circles as he thrusts, making Rukia moan and claw at his back.

Their lovemaking quickly builds to a fever pitch, each chanting the other's name. It isn't long before Rukia's body spasms around Ichigo's in a monumental release that completely overtakes her senses.

When Ichigo feels Rukia's body grip and release him in rapid succession, the floodgates are blown open in an earth-moving orgasm.

The pair cling desperately to each other, trembling in one another's arms. Panting hard, Ichigo peers into Rukia's face. Her eyes are glossy with fresh tears, a look of deep affection behind the sheen. Ichigo strokes her face. "My god, Rukia"

His voice cracks with emotion, his eyes developing a glossy sheen of their own. Rukia removes her hands from his hair to stroke his cheek as he is hers. "I love you, Ichigo," she whispers. With that, she pulls him into a tender kiss, smothering any would-be response.

_I can't believe it, _thinks Ichigo. _My father was right. I've never felt closer to Rukia than I do right now. It seems so obvious to me now I don't know how I didn't see it before._

When Rukia releases Ichigo from the liplock, Ichigo meets her eyes again. He strokes her cheek softly. "Rukia," he whispers, "I love you."

Rukia's heart skips a beat and her breath catches in her throat. Her eyes widen in surprise. "Ichigo" Her eyes begin to fill with tears anew. Ichigo presses his lips to hers once more in a deep, lingering, meaningful kiss.

****QQQQ****

After showering and returning to bed, Ichigo has something on his mind. "Rukia, can I ask you something?"

"Of course, anything."

"The night of my party when we got a bite to eat at McDonald's I commented on how the 'new look' you were sporting was unlike you. You said 'maybe that's why I did it.' When I asked you what you meant by that, you said 'nothing' and changed the subject. Could you tell me now? I'd like to know"

"Hm. Well I didn't exactly know myself what I meant at the time; it was like an afterthought. Or a 'before thought,' I guess. I think I just meant I just wanted you to _notice _me, as a _woman _and not just a fighter. I didn't want to be just 'one of the guys.'"

"Well I can tell with you absolute certainty, I do NOT see you as 'one of the guys!'" Ichigo snickers. "I never really did, but that outfit you wore to my party just really pointed out that fact!"

Rukia smiles. "I guess I owe Rangiku-san a big thank you! She's the one who talked me into that outfit in the first place!"

"In that case, I'll thank her too!"

They both chuckle, then settle into one another's arms for the night.

****QQQQ****

****A/N:** ****It's just my opinion, but I believe the twins would indeed be happy for IchiRuki, as would Isshin, and they'd all be fine with them sharing a bed in the house. If you disagreeâ€|why are you still here? hehe**

5. Chapter 5

****WEDNESDAY****

Rukia sleepily slaps off the annoying alarm and nudges Ichigo. "It's time to get up, Ichigo, we have school today."

Ichigo groans. "Already? Mmmmâ€|why don't we just _skip _school today, Rukia?"

Rukia giggles. "Come on, sleepyhead. You can always take a nap after school if you're that tired. But you should at least make the effort."

Ichigo gets a sly grin on his face, snaking an arm over Rukia's torso. "Well thenâ€|how do you feel aboutâ€|just being a little bit _late?"_

Rukia immediately grasps his meaning. "What did you have in mind?" she replies in a sultry voice, a sly smile spreading across her face.

"Hm, I'll give you three guessesâ€|"

With that, their lips meet as their limbs wind around one another.

Ichigo maneuvers Rukia under him, kissing her while he slides her shirt up her body. Within moments, the "nightie" is off. Ichigo begins to move his lips down from Rukia's mouth to kiss an invisible trail down her neck. Rukia runs her hands through Ichigo's hair and down his bare back (she refused to let him put a shirt on to sleep in the previous night).

Ichigo makes it to Rukia's waiting breasts, suckling at one while manipulating the other with his free hand. Rukia moans at the feel of it all, as well as in response to Ichigo's verbalizationsâ€|"indicating his _own _pleasure in the activities.

Then Ichigo's mouth leaves Rukia's breast to continue kissing downward, his available hand staying 'on duty.' Rukia feels his hot breath on her navel, and his fingertips underneath the hem of her panties. She begins to pant in anticipation. Ichigo peels back the undergarment, slowly sliding it down and off. Then he slinks back up her body, kissing her navel once more before moving the action lower.

Rukia sharply sucks in a rush of air when she suddenly feels Ichigo's warm, wet tongue on the most private part of her body. "Oh, God," she breathes, arching her back.

Ichigo's head is buzzing. He can taste Rukia's want for him and hear her pleasure, and this excites him more than the act itself. He slips two digits inside her for a fresh Rukia-gasp, pumping as he licks and suckles at her jewel.

Rukia takes hold of Ichigo's hair with both hands, filling her fists with it and pulling tightly (yet not enough to actually hurt). She moans his name, her eyes fluttering closed, the back of her head pinning her pillow tightly to the bed. Ichigo picks up speed, making Rukia buck into him and breathe so heavily it borders on hyperventilation.

Ichigo's own desire for Rukia spikes with every sound she makes, every movement of her body. This was meant for Rukia's pleasure but Ichigo finds it quite exhilarating himself.

Soon, Rukia cries out Ichigo's name in disjointed syllables as she clamps around him in a beautiful and intense release.

Ichigo slides up the bed next to Rukia with a small smile of pride on his face. She can't speak for lack of oxygen for a moment and can only tell him with her eyes how good that had just felt, not that he needed her to say so anyway. Her body and intonations had told him that much.

Once her breathing has calmed, Rukia finally speaks. "Ichigoâ€|that wasâ€|well I don't know how to describe that, really. I mean 'awesome' doesn't even come close!"

Ichigo grins devilishly. "I thought you might like that. I know I did!"

"Well," Rukia begins, "looks like I owe you a little something now, don't I?" She's the one grinning devilishly, now.

Ichigo looks a little confused, unsure what she means exactly, but he knows it's gotta be something good!

Rukia straddles Ichigo's legs above his knees, and takes hold of the waistbands of both his sweatpants and boxers at once, and tugs them both down. That's his first clueâ€|and the only one he needs. His mouth becomes a silent oval, his eyes closed in excited prescience.

Once the clothing is out of the wayâ€|Rukia returns the favor Ichigo did for her. Her mouth encompasses his engorged manhood, immediately moving up and down with moderate suction, running her tongue all along the underside and paying special attention to the tip. Ichigo lies back helplessly as he begins to feel completely out of control-and not minding one bit. Rukia seems to really know what she's doing! It feels too good for any words _he _knows.

He begins to sputter Rukia's name in halted parts, fisting his hands in Rukia's hair as she had done to him. Rukia delights in his pleasure, and finds the experience of such intimate contact thrilling in and of itself. She moans into him as she pumps, creating small

waves of vibration that intensify Ichigo's enjoyment. Soon, Ichigo is on the brink. He tries to remove Rukia's head from his body so as not to make her gag, gently letting her know what's approaching, but she resists his attempt to pluck her off him. With a wail, Ichigo bursts. Rukia stays herself right there, taking it all in and down without a negative reaction, as if she had been doing it for years.

When Ichigo finally stops pulsing, Rukia lets him go, wiping her mouth and giving him a self-satisfied smile. He smiles in return. "Wow, Rukiaâ€¦that was freaking amazing! How the hell did you know how to do that?"

"Well what about you? You seemed to be like some sort of expert on me a minute agoâ€¦wait. Ichigo? Umâ€¦does this mean thatâ€¦and I swear I won't get upset, I'm just curiousâ€¦have youâ€¦I meanâ€¦umâ€¦"

Ichigo chuckles. "No, Rukia, I've never done that before. You're the only woman I've ever been with. Butâ€¦what about you?"

Rukia glares at him. "You should know the answer to that!"

"OK, well then tell me how you learned to do that?"

Rukia blushes. "Wellâ€¦in Sereitei, my sexual education came in the form of books. But they were all technical. I learned the moreâ€¦uhâ€¦_creative _stuff, believe it or not, from a romance novel I found in your closet."

Ichigo laughs. "Ya know what? When my dad thought it was time I learned about sex, he brought me books too. Mostly medical books and journals; technical like you said. But then he gave me a few romance novels for, as he put it, 'the feminine side of things.' At the time I thought it was a dumb idea, reading books meant for girls, but he insisted. Now I'm glad of it, cuz it taught me stuff the medical books didn't, and look how that turned out!"

It's Rukia's turn to laugh. "Yeah, you're sure right about that! But it's funny, though, because I never would have dreamed that the book I found in your closet was yours all alongâ€¦I always just assumed one of your sisters left it there!"

They share a laugh together at that. They embrace each other for a few moments to drink in the feel of one another, two naked and 'drained' bodies coming together like two matching pieces of a puzzle. After cuddling for a few minutes, they finally get up and get ready for school. Fully dressed, bookbags in hand, they get to the door of the bedroom. Ichigo pauses, his hand on the door.

"I love you, Rukia." he tells her tenderly, peering into soft, warm lavender eyes. Rukia smiles. "I love you, tooâ€¦jerk." They grin at one another, and then head out the bedroom and then the front door, walking happily to school together.

****THE END****

****A/N: ****I hope you guys enjoyed this little story! It was sure fun to writeâ€¦and challenging (sometimes frustrating to no end). I usually write an epilogue for my stories, but this one just didn't call for one. I divided my chapters by day, rather than by my usual

chapter-style. Tho I put an epilogue-ish ending on here right after the limes. Hope it's ok with you guys, dear readers!

Once again, please leave a feedback or pm or even emailâ€¦if not about the story, then at least for my daughter's artwork? We would both love that! Tyvm!

(my email: missycamp at hotmail dot com. No spaces. Put "BLEACH" in all caps in header so I won't toss it as junk.)

****THANK YOU TO ALL WHO READ THIS STORY, ESPECIALLY THOSE WHO COMMENTED!****

End
file.